

Editor's Note: This essay won the second prize in the Draper Essay Contest, sponsored by the Draper Armor Leadership Award Fund to mark the 75th anniversary of the program. Contestants were asked to write on the subject: "Leadership in the XXI Century — Digital Age."



Riding To the Sound of the Guns: Leadership in the XXI Century — Digital Age

by Major Scott L. Efflandt

In today's era of vast change it is often difficult to identify the path to victory.¹ Clearly, our force's success to date has been built on the cornerstone of effective and inspirational leadership.² The words of past mounted warriors — such as Stuart, Patton, and Abrams — and contemporary warriors — such as Ulmer, Bahnsen, Thurman, Franks, Tate, and Funk — continue to resonate with timeless wisdom.³ Yet because their words are timeless, this sage advice cannot directly address the forthcoming challenges peculiar to leaders in the digital age. This paper builds on our heritage to provide direction to Armored/Cavalry leaders in the digital age. In short, I argue that the future success of mounted warriors will stem from our ability as leaders to look beyond how we have been successful and instead focus on why we have been successful. Although counterintuitive to the traditional AAR⁴ method, such an approach is imperative for our branch to outpace the current rate of change and continue its essential service to the Army.

Our branch, metaphorically speaking, is a horse at full gallop; now, we, as leaders, must grab the reins and take charge of its direction. Towards this end, I begin by identifying the salient changes of the digital age as they apply to our force. These changes fall into two areas: a) Leadership challenges relating to the mission and, b) Leadership challenges relating to soldiers. I close recommending

that Armor/Cavalry leaders respond to these challenges with actions that are both congruent with our dogma and foster that Armor/Cavalry state of mind.

The Digital Age

*The economic and technological triumphs of the past few years have not solved as many problems as we thought they would, and, in fact, have brought us new problems we did not foresee. — Henry Ford II*⁵

The rapid rate of change in so many areas clearly indicates the beginning of a new era — the digital age. During times of large and rapid change, the truly effective leaders are those who identify the most significant changes and then enable their organizations to act upon them. Changes in the digital age relevant to the Armor/Cavalry community fall into one of two categories. The first category — changes in military affairs — includes changes that effect what missions we perform and how we do them. The second category — changes in personnel affairs — encompasses those factors related to the soldiers we lead and how we lead them.

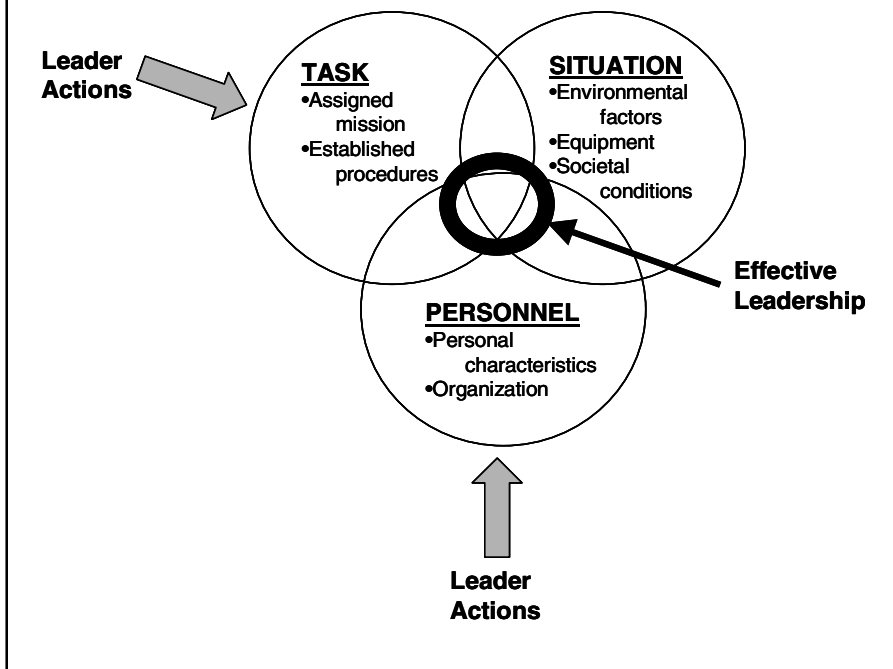
Changes in Military Affairs

A revolution in military affairs (RMA), by definition, occurs when a military force fundamentally changes the way it operates, within a brief span of time, in

order to gain an unprecedented and enduring advantage.⁶ A RMA does not develop automatically from technological advances as part of a teleological process, but from the ability of military forces to integrate new technology, change their methods and/or organization, and concepts of war.⁷ In contrast, evolutions in military affairs (EMA) develop from incremental change and provide continuity to previous generations. Evolving organizations, while they enjoy the increased predictability that comes from incremental change, become increasingly vulnerable to organizations that experience a RMA. In effect, a RMA victory results from the leadership's ability to avoid relegating change to an EMA.

Technological advances and social change in an environment are necessary but insufficient for a RMA; it takes leadership to complete the process. While many see recent technology advances enabling a RMA,⁸ significant changes in three other areas also enable a RMA. First, the nature of war is shifting. The combatants are often irregular forces seeking their own sovereignty with cross-national allegiance.⁹ Second, the methods of warfare are changing. Peacekeeping and peace enforcement duties, as well as humanitarian operations, have increasingly occupied the Army — a trend likely to continue into the future.¹⁰ Finally, how and who we fight has undergone massive change. Increasingly, the Army deploys

Figure 1: Leadership Process



as part of a joint or multinational force where several separate entities judge our performance against varying criteria.¹¹

Changes in Personnel Affairs

In spite of the above changes in military affairs, soldiers will remain the fulcrum element of our force — yet they, too, have undergone change. While the media labels each generation of recruits as distinct — with terms such as Generation X — Armor/Cavalry leaders need to enter the digital age recognizing larger personnel changes. American society has undergone a “skill revolution.” As a consequence, people today are characterized by: a) an increased learning capacity, b) the ability to analyze causal sequences and see their position in world events, and c) the ability to recognize and articulate their values.¹² At the organizational level, our personnel are more demographically varied, dispersed, and interconnected throughout the active and reserve components than ever before.¹³

Leading in the Digital Age

Clearly, before undertaking any change to meet the digital age, an assessment is in order. For over 150 years, the mounted arm has been the decisive component of Army operations. As Armor/Cavalry leaders we must ask ourselves, how can we further this tradition and avoid resting on our laurels? Certainly we do not want to end up like the Samurai of ancient Japan who maintained internal order at the expense of adequate preparation

against exterior threats. Clearly, the magnitude of change associated with the digital age necessitates Armor/Cavalry leaders effectively transforming the force.

Our task, as Armor/Cavalry leaders, is to ensure our force contributes to the Army’s mission in the digital age. “Leadership is influencing people — by providing purpose, direction, and motivation — while operating to accomplish the mission and improving the organization.”¹⁴ Because “leadership is contextual,”¹⁵ the

greater our understanding of the situation, the greater our potential to reconcile it with the task and personnel (see Figure 1).¹⁶ However, recognizing the potential of a situation is necessary, but not sufficient for success. Organizations triumph when the method and direction leaders provide exploits change. To identify the best method and direction for Armor/Cavalry organizations, respective leaders should ground their actions against two tenets. First, leader actions in response to military affairs should reflect our dogma. Second, leaders must continue to develop in our personnel that Armor/Cavalry state of mind.

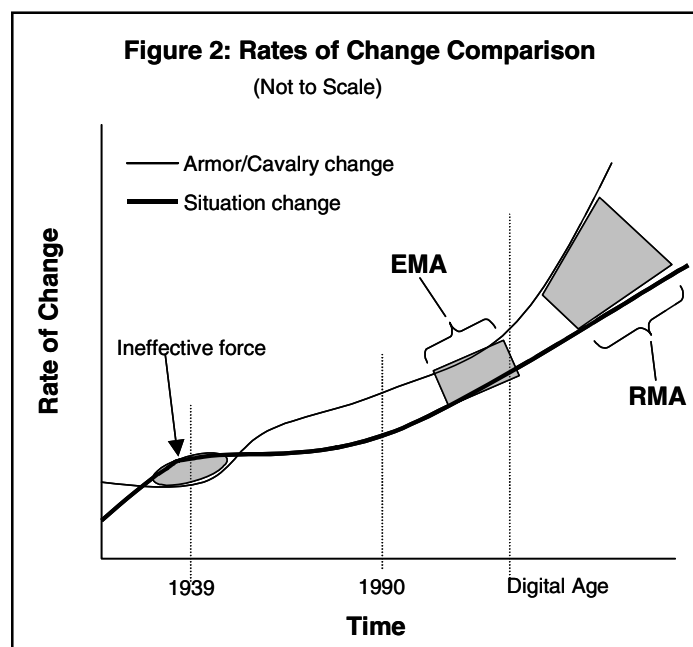
Leadership and Military Affairs

In the final analysis, you should never forget that the airplanes don’t fly, the tanks don’t run ...unless the sons and daughters of America make them do it. A lot of people have been talking about the great technology, but they’ve been talking about that since the day I graduated [sic from USMA in 1956]. — Norman Schwarzkopf¹⁷

Changes in military affairs do not by themselves guarantee sufficient organizational change to produce a RMA — consider the Polish cavalry in 1939.¹⁸ The rate of change in military affairs and military organizations are non-linear and independent of one another (see Figure 2). Notably, the Army as a whole is attempting to effect a RMA through information dominance,¹⁹ new doctrine,²⁰ and

Figure 2: Rates of Change Comparison

(Not to Scale)



in many other areas — ranging from force structure to training methods.

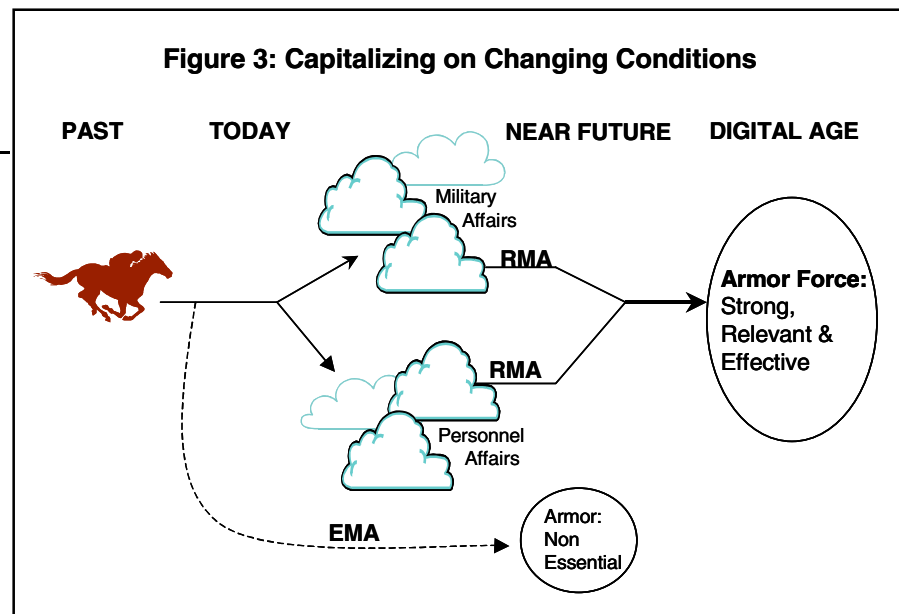
While the Army as a whole seeks a RMA, this does not guarantee that all of its sub-components will experience a RMA or develop proportionally. Thus, the ranks of Armor branch must initiate their own RMA. We must avoid the temptation to respond to the new conditions of military affairs with incremental improvements and thus perpetuate an EMA. Because “organizational energy is finite,”²¹ Armor/Cavalry leaders must decide how and where to expend limited resources, in response to the digital age, to produce a RMA in their organizations. We cannot allow changes in technology to mask the larger changes in military affairs, and in turn limit or dilute our organizational response. By adhering to our dogma — a code of unfailing canons — Armor/Cavalry leaders can identify the important changes to act upon.

The function a military organization performs on the battlefield — as opposed to its methods — defines its dogma. The respective dogmas of Armor and Cavalry are: a) Decisive action through the components of shock, firepower, and maneuver or; b) Reconnaissance, security, economy of force. The value of these roles remains timeless, as evident by their execution on foot, horseback, helicopter, and motor vehicles. Future Army missions will continue to require that these two roles be filled. Armor/Cavalry leaders must develop units that continue to fill this role in the digital age. To perpetuate the tradition, Armor/Cavalry leaders must use our dogma as a guide to address the impact of all changes in military affairs in order to effect a true RMA within our branch.

Leadership and Personnel

Armor isn't a branch, it's a state of mind. Successful Armor leaders, cavalrymen, and fighter pilots share similar skills and mindsets. Systems are secondary to their state of mind. — John Kirk²²

Exceptional soldiers, troopers, and crewmen have long been, and must continue as, the trademark of Armor branch. This single element, more than any other, has enabled victory. The Armor/Cavalry soldier's state of mind — marked by initiative, daring, and intellect — spans our near 200-year history as a hallmark characteristic. Leadership in the digital age means developing this spirit and intellect in our soldiers at every level, in every



component. We cannot afford to define our relationship with subordinates by MOS, TO&E, or some other quantitative paradigm.²³ More than anything else, ours is a branch about people!

Good situational awareness of the changes in personnel affairs enables leaders to capitalize on the opportunities afforded. Since the attributes and values of today's soldiers diverge from those of previous generations, traditional methods of developing soldiers become rendered obsolete in the digital age. Fortunately, our Army has a history of responding to such change. In WWII, American GIs, as citizen soldiers, lacked the disposition necessary to attain the much-acclaimed Prussian model of conformity and obedience.²⁴ Yet this “failing” was the very reason for our branch's success in the hedgerows of Europe despite significant doctrinal and equipment shortcomings.²⁵ Previous generations of Armor/Cavalry leaders capitalized on what the citizen brought to the force by empowering soldiers with the requisite state of mind, rather than attempting to shape all into an “ideal” soldier.²⁶

In the digital age, our subordinates will operate in a variety of roles, but all of these will require the personal fortitude that embodies the state of mind that signifies mounted warriors.²⁷ Rather than see subordinate development in terms of skills required for a duty position we must: a) structure their development to take advantage of the “skill revolution” and, b) measure our success at developing them by their internalization of the branch's ethos. Ultimately our force is a brotherhood — a social network — that extends across active/reserve components and beyond unit boundaries. Thus leaders must recognize all components as one

force and personally communicate to them the mission/intent, while taking the extra time to help them grab the horse's reins. Personal interaction — as we nurture, coach and mentor subordinates — allows us to capitalize on the strengths of today's soldier and build trust. Confidence follows from trust and enables the necessary state of mind upon which our future success rests.

Conclusion

Brethren, Armor and Cavalry is not defined by the equipment we use, but by what we do for the Army. As leaders, we have a responsibility to continue serving our soldiers and Army through initiative and change. It is beneath us to stand by and wait for the conditions that suit us, instead we must position ourselves so that we are always riding to the sound of the guns — in whatever form that may take (see Figure 3). Our dogma remains relevant and should guide us to, and through, the digital age. Shock, firepower, maneuver; reconnaissance, security, economy of force — we have a long history of executing this dogma better than anyone else. As a result, we owe it to the Army to continue the tradition. This is our worthy responsibility as leaders. We fulfill this responsibility by both developing effective teams from high quality soldiers — who have an Armor/Cavalry state of mind — and capitalizing on the changes in military affairs to lead a RMA.

Notes

¹This paper prepared for the 75th anniversary of the Draper Leadership program. The contents enclosed are solely the position of the author and do not explicitly or implicitly represent Armor branch, the U.S. Army, or the Department of

Defense. Permission to cite or reproduce beyond the activities of the Draper program is available from the author. Address questions and comments to the author, whose name and address can be obtained from Director of the Office of the Chief of Armor, ATTN: ATZK-AR, Draper Custodian, 1109 Sixth Ave. Fort Knox, KY 40121-5000.

²The author wishes to thank majors Clark Backus and Jon Negin for their comments on earlier drafts.

³Davis, Burke, *Jeb Stuart: The Last Cavalier* (New York, N.Y.: Wings Books, [1957] 1994); Porter, Williamson, *Patton's Principles* (Tucson, Ariz.: MCS Inc., 1979); Patton, George, Jr., *War as I Knew It* (New York, N.Y.: Bantam Books, [1947] 1975); Sorley, Lewis, *Thunderbolt: Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times* (New York, N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1992); Clancy, Tom, *Into the Storm* (New York, N.Y.: Berkley Books, 1997); Reference to the leadership principles of the other officers cited has come from public addresses and personal conversations with each from 1987-1998.

⁴After Action Review.

⁵Ford, Henry II, In *Webster's 21st Century Book of Quotations* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1992), p. 275.

⁶For historical examples, see discussions of "gunpowder revolution," Porter, Bruce, *War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern Politics* (New York, N.Y.: The Free Press, 1994), pp. 64-68; or the "pikemen phalanx," Downing, Brian, *The Military Revolution and Political Change* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 61.

⁷Kagan, Frederick, 1995, cited by Douglas Macgregor, *Breaking the Phalanx* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997), pp. 31-32.

⁸The periodicals and journals of our profession cite multiple instances of technological improvements that could lead to a RMA; information acquisition and transfer, target detection, munitions lethality and precision, and automation to name just a few.

⁹Holsti, Kalevi, *The State, War, and the State of War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹⁰Segal, David and Robert Waldman, "Multinational Peacekeeping Operations: Background and Effectiveness," pp. 183-200 in *The Adaptive Military: Armed Forces in a Turbulent World*, by J. Burk, editor (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1998).

¹¹Burk, James, "Thinking Through the End of the Cold War," pp. 25-48 in *The Adaptive Military: Armed Forces in a Turbulent World*, by J. Burk, editor (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1998).

¹²Rosenau, James, "Armed Forces and Armed Forces in a Turbulent World," pp. 49-86 in *The Adaptive Military: Armed Forces in a Turbulent World*, by J. Burk, editor, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1998).

¹³Moskos, Charles and John Butler, *All That We Can Be: Black Leadership and Racial Integration*

the Army Way (N.Y.: Harper Collins, 1996); Moskos, Charles and James Burk, "The Post-modern Military," pp. 163-182 in *The Adaptive Military: Armed Forces in a Turbulent World*, by J. Burk, editor, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1998).

¹⁴Army, U.S., *Field Manual 22-100: Army Leadership*, 1996, accessed at: <http://www.fm22-100.army.mil>. 19 Aug.

¹⁵LeBoeuf, Joeseeph, 1998, Program Director, Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership, U.S. Military Academy.

¹⁶This conception differs from other models of leadership that do not explicitly recognize the changing effects of: a) the environment, see Hughes, Robert, Robert Ginnett and Gordon Curphy, *Leadership: Enhancing the Lessons of Experience* (Boston, Mass.: Irwin/McGraw Hill, 1999), p. 60; or b) the institutional inertia that can dictate how a task is performed, see DuBrien, Andrew, *Leadership* (New York, N.Y.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1998), pp. 18-20.

¹⁷Schwarzkopf, Norman, Address to the Corps. U.S. Military Academy, 15 May 1991, West Point, N.Y., Eisenhower Hall.

¹⁸A conceptual diagram, not an analytical historical comparison.

¹⁹Reimer, Dennis, 1997, *CSA 97-01, Random Thoughts While Running*, dtd 22 JAN 97, distributed via e-mail.

²⁰Kirk, John, "Controlling Armor's Destiny," *ARMOR Magazine*, March-April 1999, pp. 8-15.

²¹Cone, Bob, 1995, Commander 1/3 ACR, Fort Bliss, Texas.

²²Kirk, pp. 8-15.

²³Military Occupational Specialty, Table of Organization and Equipment.

²⁴Ambrose, Stephen, *Citizen Soldiers* (New York, N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1997). See also Cohen, Elliot. *Citizens and Soldiers* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).

²⁵Folkstad, William, *The View from the Turret*, (Shippensburg, Pa.: Burd Street Press, 1996).

²⁶Lindekk, Tore, 1992, "The Weberian Ideal-Type: Development and Continuities," *Acta Sociologica*, 35:285-297.

²⁷Ryan, Mike, 1999, explains how determination in the faces of 19K soldiers operating as peacekeepers in Kosovo was critical to mission success.

MAJ Scott Efflandt is an instructor in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership at the U.S. Military Academy. He has served as a tank platoon leader, support platoon leader, company XO, BMO, operations officer, and B Troop commander, 1st Sqdn, 3d Cav. He has written for *ARMOR* in the past.